

Navy & Marine Corps Medical News (MEDNEWS)  
#97-05  
30 January 1997

This service distributes news and information to Sailors and Marines, their families, civilian employees, and retired Navy and Marine Corps families. Further dissemination of this e-mail is encouraged.

Headlines this week include:

- (97034) Navy Medicine Helps Tough Keep Going
- (97035) Corpsman Renders Aid to Gunshot Victim
- (97036) Lessons learned by Studying Gulf War Illness
- (97037) Where a Healthy Pregnancy Really Begins
- (97038) Courage Defined
- (97039) Tuition Assistance for Spouses
- (97040) TRICARE Questions and Answers
- (97041) HEALTHWATCH: Stand Up Straight

Headline: Navy Medicine Helps Tough Keep Going

PARRIS ISLAND, SC -- When the going gets tough, the tough get going. That could be the new motto for the Sailors and Marines at the Marine Corps Recruit Depot at Parris Island, SC.

Beginning last month, the Marine Corps began a tough training program for its Marine recruits at Parris Island, which included "The Crucible," a 54-hour trial-by-fire where recruits march about 40 miles, receive two and a half MREs (Meals Ready-to-Eat), and sleep no more than four hours per night. Parris Island is one of two sites where The Crucible is part of the training program; Camp Pendleton is the other.

Medical personnel of all ranks from the Branch Medical Clinic have played an integral role in the Crucible.

"We're there to provide medical support," said HN Regan Smith, who works in the clinic's sports medicine department. Not only do the medical personnel perform a pre-crucible screening to determine if a recruit is healthy and able to complete the strenuous journey, but they also accompany the recruits during their rigorous Crucible course.

While the entire staff of the branch medical clinic supports the Crucible, two doctors, a podiatrist and a general medical officer, and six hospital corpsmen directly support the Crucible by monitoring the safety and health of the recruits explained Smith.

"We load our packs with medical gear, fill our canteens, then we're off on the march with the recruits," said HM1 Steven Teafor, Leading Petty Officer of the Crucible Battalion Aid Station.

According to Teafor, blisters is the most common complaint for the recruits.

"We carry a lot of gauze and moleskin," said Teafor.

Along with blisters, other major health concerns are dehydration, hypothermia, hyperthermia, and stress fractures. Hospital Corpsmen and doctors monitor the water and caloric

intake of the recruits at different phases of the Crucible.

Through teamwork and commitment, the Navy medical staff at Parris Island and the Marine Corps recruit training staff help young Marine recruits overcome a strenuous and demanding course that the recruits will surely recall with fond memories when the going gets tough.

By LT Edie Rosenthal, BUMED Public Affairs Office

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Headline: Corpsman Renders Aid to Gunshot Victim

WASHINGTON -- Some say we all have a guardian angel, and for one wayward Washington, DC teenager, he found his guardian angel in Navy Hospital Corpsman Victor C. Chavis.

It was fate that brought the two together, and undoubtedly a day neither will forget.

"I was driving toward the Pentagon and I saw a van speed past me," said Chavis. "I saw the driver was a teenager who had gotten himself into trouble because he was being chased by some police cars."

A few seconds later, Chavis, was forced to stop his vehicle at a police road block. Unbeknownst to Chavis, Defense Protective Service officers from the Pentagon had been in pursuit of five teenagers for stealing a minivan from the Pentagon parking lot. Three of the suspects were apprehended and were sitting right there in front of Chavis. The other two had passed him a few seconds earlier in the speeding van.

When he noticed one of the teenagers lying on the ground with blood in front of him, he automatically did what he has been trained to do in the Navy -- save lives.

"I saw an injured teenager who was bleeding and needed help, but there was no ambulance," explained the 11-year Navy veteran who grew up in Brooklyn, NY.

Without hesitation, Chavis approached the police officers to see if they needed assistance. When they noticed the emblem of the medical profession on his sleeve, they asked if he could render aid to the injured youth.

Years of medical training in the Navy and as a Hospital Corpsman serving with the Fleet Marine Force helped Chavis to immediately assess the situation, and when he knelt down to assist the injured teenager he heard the victim say, "Help me. Please help me."

"I was surprised to find him fully alert because he had lost a lot of blood," said Chavis. "It didn't matter to me what he had done to get himself into this situation, I just saw a kid and he was begging for help."

The handcuffed 15-year old had multiple gunshot wounds. He had been shot twice in the neck, once to the chest, and also one to the head.

"I've seen a lot of car accident victims, and I've had to help patch them up, but this is the first time I've worked on a gunshot victim," said Chavis.

Chavis stopped the bleeding and continued to render first aid for about 15 minutes before paramedics arrived on

the scene and then transferred the youth to a local hospital.

"I was glad that I was trained and that I was able to help." said Chavis.

One of the paramedics on the scene mentioned that the teenager was lucky to have Chavis there to help. But it was more than luck, it was destiny.

By LT Edie Rosenthal, BUMED Public Affairs Office

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Headline: Lessons learned by Studying Gulf War Illness

WASHINGTON (NNS) -- Illnesses suffered by veterans of the Gulf War have taught the Department of Defense valuable lessons, according to DoD's chief medical officer.

"Though difficult for us all, there is a proverbial silver-lining with respect to the Gulf War experience," said Dr. Stephen Joseph, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs, at a recent Pentagon press briefing.

Following the war, he said, DOD developed ways to better protect troops from "the full range of hazards in theater, including chemical and biological agents [and] strengthened basic public health measures against environmental hazards."

The department also improved medical records and is currently refining a soldier-carried, computer-based medical dog tag. In addition, a new deployment and post-deployment medical surveillance system helps identify health problems for prevention and also more rapid diagnoses, Joseph said.

"The lessons learned from the Gulf War make us better able to protect our people, better able to listen to and dialogue with our troops, better able to understand the causes of their illnesses, better able to prevent illness and injury and better able to diagnose and treat what we cannot prevent."

by Douglas J. Gillert American Forces Press Service

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Headline: Where a Healthy Pregnancy Really Begins

PENSACOLA, FL -- Birth defects can be an emotionally and financially devastating experience for any family. It is not always possible to predict exactly who might be affected by such an occurrence. There are, however, known identifiable risk factors that can be reduced or eliminated if addressed early or preferably before a pregnancy begins.

There has been a growing emphasis in the obstetrical field on pre-conceptual counseling and care. Potential parents need to think of their pregnancy as a 12 month event -- beginning at least three months prior to conception. Women, and men, need to be both physically and emotionally ready for pregnancy.

Because healthy women are more likely to have healthy babies, good health prior to pregnancy is a must. A pre-conception visit to the primary care manager or obstetrician

is the best way to evaluate a woman's readiness. The pre-conception visit is an opportunity to evaluate pre-existing medical conditions, genetic factors, nutritional status, habits, occupational and environmental hazards, and psychosocial risk factors. All of these play an important role in reducing risks of birth defects and poor pregnancy outcomes.

Experts have determined that all women would benefit from pre-conception care. It is recommended that the pre-conception visit be done within the year that pregnancy is planned. Although all birth defects cannot always be prevented, it is clear that good pre-conception planning and care can significantly improve the chances for a healthy and happy mother and baby.

by LT Cheryl L. Hackett, NC, OB/Gyn Clinic Division Officer  
NH Pensacola, FL

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Headline: Courage Defined

WASHINGTON -- The following message about courage was sent from the Commandant of the Marine Corps, GEN. C. C. Krulak, USMC, to the troops:

Courage is not the absence of fear, but is our personal assessment that something else is more important than the fear which confronts us. A life lived in fear is a life of bondage, while a life of courage is one which experiences liberty and freedom.

Courage is the determination to make the best of whatever circumstances you find yourself in...regardless of cost. More often than not that cost is not cheap. Shakespeare wrote, "Cowards die many times before their deaths; the valiant never taste of death but once."

Courage is a necessary ingredient for living a life without regrets. It takes courage to make the right moral and ethical choices which confront us daily. Courage, acted out in our lives, watches out for the oppressed, speaks up for the weak, takes a stand against injustice and immorality and does so at our own expense. But the courage to take a stand against what is popular and easy, when required, is the key to experiencing a clear and uncluttered conscience.

United States Marines are renowned the world over for their courage both in war and in peace. This fame and admiration which Marines have earned is based not on fearlessness, but on each individual act of bravery and the willingness of Marines to subordinate their fears for a higher calling and a greater good.

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Headline: Tuition Assistance for Spouses

WASHINGTON -- Thinking of going overseas? Traveling overseas often provides adventure to military people, but for spouses a tour overseas can also prove to be a learning experience.

Spouses of active duty service members residing

overseas now have two opportunities to receive tuition assistance from the Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society (NMCRS).

NMCRS offers the Spouse Tuition Aid Program (STAP) which allows full-time and part-time students to receive financial assistance for graduate and undergraduate courses per term.

Also available is the VADM E. P. Travers Scholarship and Loan Program which includes children and spouses of active duty service members both overseas and stateside. This program is for full-time undergraduate courses. Qualified applicants can receive a scholarship of up to \$2,000 and a loan of up to \$3,000 per academic year.

For more information on this program and other NMCRS education programs contact your local NMCRS office. By Kimberly Allen, Public Affairs, Bureau of Medicine and Surgery

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#### Headline: TRICARE Questions and Answers

Question: My Primary Care Manager ordered blood tests and an x-ray, which I had the next day. Because it was a civilian outpatient visit on a different day than my appointment, an additional copayment was required of me. Is there any way I can avoid paying the additional copayment?

Answer: One possible way to avoid these separate copayments is to check with your military treatment facility (MTF) to see if services such as x-rays and lab tests can be provided. Because of limited resources, not all MTFs can provide these services.

Question: I'm enrolled in TRICARE Prime. If I have to go to a civilian emergency room for care, will I have to pay a copayment for each of the services I receive?

Answer: Copayment for each service received is different in the case of civilian emergency room services provided during an emergency visit. While the \$30 emergency room copayment is higher than an outpatient visit copayment, it covers all emergency room services, such as x-rays, blood tests or urinalysis, in conjunction with the visit.

For more information, contact your local TRICARE Service Center or your local military treatment facility.

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#### Headline: HEALTHWATCH: Stand Up Straight

WASHINGTON -- At one time or another we all can remember the words "stand up straight" or "stop slouching" echo from our mothers. For those of us that listened, we may have avoided many aches and pains. And for those of us that chose not to listen, well, that may explain many of the aches and pains that we feel in our backs.

If you have suffered from back pain, you are not alone. It is estimated that eight out of ten people experience back pain at some time in their lives. But you can keep your back problem-free by paying attention to your posture and by

strengthening your back, leg, and abdominal muscles.

Although some back problems, such as arthritis, curvature of the spine (scoliosis), bulging discs and a herniated (ruptured) disc, are difficult to avoid, the majority of back aches are due to poor posture (both when lifting and not lifting) and weak supporting muscles.

The back is composed of 24 movable bones called vertebrae. Between each vertebra is a shock absorbing pad called a disc. Both the vertebrae and the discs are kept in proper alignment by ligaments and muscles.

Proper alignment means that the back curves gently in three places: The neck, behind the chest, and the lower back. "The alignment of the spine is extremely critical to allowing free motion of the individual vertebra. Poor posture, stress and strain and accidents can cause a fixation of one or more vertebral segments. This will in turn produce an irritation to the nerves from between the vertebra which will cause muscle spasms and will alter your posture to compensate for the pain," says Donald Lee Baldwin, Chiropractor at Naval Air Station Jacksonville, FL.

Poor posture forces the spinal column to work harder, instead of distributing the load to your legs and other parts of the body that can more easily bear the load. Proper posture when you sit, stand, lift, recline, and move can prevent some of the more common causes of back pain.

Strong back and abdominal muscles can contribute to a pain free back, since they ultimately support the spinal column. Baldwin says, "Strong abdominal muscles are essential to strengthen and protect the lower back. If the abdominal muscles are weak you have a tendency to slouch causing abnormal pressure on the lower back."

Baldwin adds, "Healthy abdominals help maintain posture and the proper curve of the spine. The forward curve of the lower back will also benefit the upper back secondarily." Your thigh and hamstring muscles also help balance your torso and spine. Exercising all these muscles can insure the proper tone for good posture and a healthy back.

To minimize or eliminate the pain do strengthening exercises for your back, leg, and abdominal muscles such as, walking, running, progressive resistance exercises, and supervised weightlifting.

In addition to exercising, many of the normal aches and pains can be prevented by taking precautions. Here are some tips to keep you on the job and pain-free:

- When possible, sit in straight-backed chairs with a firm support.
- If you experience pain when lifting, STOP! Get assistance.
- When working on a computer, use a document holder to angle your work and place your computer screen so that you can look directly at it.
- Keep your weight under control.
- Use a step stool or ladder when reaching for heavy objects over your head.

- Avoid crossing legs.
- When seated in your car move the seat forward so that your knees are about level with your hips.

By Kimberly Allen, Public Affairs, Bureau of Medicine and Surgery

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Feedback and comments are welcome. Story submissions are encouraged. Contact Jan Davis, MEDNEWS editor, at e-mail address [mednews@bms200.med.navy.mil](mailto:mednews@bms200.med.navy.mil), telephone 202/762-3223 (DSN 762-3223), or fax 202/762-3224.